

Pawn of the EPA?

Woman says agency 'duped, misled' her

By Bob Slate
Staff writer

The secretary of a federal judge says she and other residents of Granite City were "duped and misled" by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency into allowing the agency access to their property to remove lead-contaminated soil.

"I find it reprehensible that those of us who trusted the EPA and allowed you on our property to do the cleanup were duped and misled by your representatives," Mary Margaret Nonn, of the 1600 block of Edison Avenue, wrote in a scathing letter to John P. Perricone, community involvement coordinator for U.S. EPA Region 5.

Nonn, who has resided on the block for years, is secretary to U.S. District Judge William Beatty in East St. Louis.

She has also served on the citizens' committee for the EPA Superfund cleanup of lead-contaminated soil since the committee was formed. In fact, according to her letter, she has attended every scheduled meeting with EPA representatives.

"We were told that once the cleanup on our property was completed, we would be given a clearance by the EPA," she wrote.

Nonn said that EPA officials — including project managers Brad Bradey and Sheri Bianchin — promised homeowners who allowed EPA access to their property a letter certifying the property as clean once their yards had been remediated.

But apparently that isn't the case.

Because some residential properties have been cleaned while others haven't, and because the city — which has filed a federal lawsuit against EPA claiming the cleanup plan will not

be effective — has refused to grant EPA access to the easements between sidewalks and curbs, the EPA has apparently refused to issue clearance to a number of residential property owners whose yards have been remediated.

"Not one time were we ever told that if your neighbor did not allow the cleanup, you would not be given clearance," Nonn wrote.

In the letter, Nonn noted that she has no control over what her neighbors or the city do with their property.

"This has to be the best kept secret of the Superfund project, and by sending a copy of this letter to the local papers, maybe I can reach at least some of the citizens of Granite City, Madison and Venice and let them know that they are in a 'Catch 22' situation, and that the EPA, wasting the taxpayers' money, is the only winner in this charade."

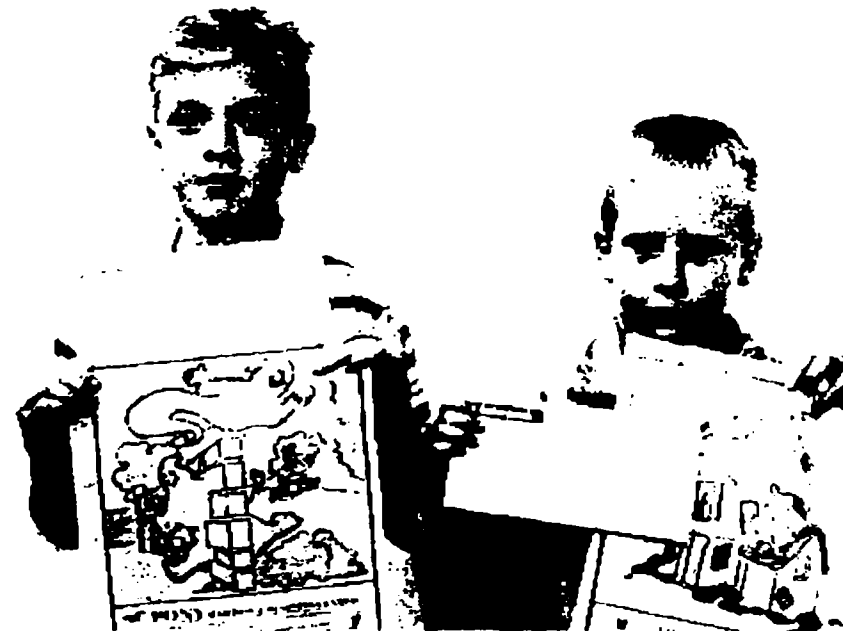
Nonn said she is also unhappy with the city for denying EPA access to easements.

"(The city and EPA) are playing a game and they're using us (property owners) as pawns," Nonn said Friday.

The EPA is in the middle of a \$75 million cleanup of residual lead from a now-defunct smelter. Its plan includes removal of contaminated soil from a 55-block area and placing it on an existing 30-acre, 290,000-ton lead scrap pile and capping the pile.

The city has objected to the plan, saying it will be ineffective because property will become recontaminated.

A University of Cincinnati study, released last summer, found high levels of lead contamination in properties already "cleaned" by OHM Corp., the company performing the cleanup work for EPA.



County budget OK'd

By Nicole Vaughn
Staff writer

Next year's budget in Madison County holds

ment; a full year of operations at the expanded Madison County Jail; a short-term increase in funding for the Madison County Museum; and extra funding to Probation and Court Services

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